



Speech by

DESLEY BOYLE

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard 20 February 2002

PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (6.44 p.m.): I am pleased to join other honourable members of the House in expressing concern about this very serious problem that is clearly Queensland wide and of course Australia wide. I understand the sentiments behind the original motion and support the broader motion moved as an amendment by Minister Bligh. This is not just an issue about the serious impacts on community groups and the associated events and important functions they provide to all of our communities. I have heard from many groups in Cairns which have had not only skyrocketing insurance prices but some of whom cannot even get insurance. The very threat to them is immediate and serious. They are not the only sector of society being affected, however. From the representations that I have received from business groups and individuals, I fear that we will see a roll-out of the problem and that it is going to get worse before it gets better. The impacts are already showing on individuals and businesses.

I am sorry to report to the House that there are some businesses in Cairns that are simply now operating without insurance. The consequences of that course of action as accidents occur and as debts and bankruptcies occur are indeed frightening to us all. I am pleased that the great majority of members of this House who have spoken in the debate tonight have clearly demonstrated that this is not a party political matter. This has nothing to do with being a member of the Labor Party, an Independent member of the House, a member of the One Nation Party, the Liberal Party or the National Party, and neither should it. We have not yet heard the position of the Liberal Party, but I hope it will join in a nonpartisan way a determination to act.

Unfortunately, however, the Leader of the Opposition has not taken that position. He has taken a party political position, further to the peril of himself and his party. He attempted to claim some action and called on the government for further action to deal with his six-point plan. I am sorry to inform honourable members of this House—and I am certainly sorry that he is not here to hear my words, that he chose not to stay for the remainder of this debate—that he was invited by the Treasurer, the then Acting Premier, to participate with the government by attending the first meeting of the liability insurance task force on Wednesday, 23 January. That letter was sent to the Leader of the Opposition on 10 January, ample time surely for him to at least consider it and reply. However, the Acting Premier received no reply.

In the third paragraph of the letter the Acting Premier offered the Leader of the Opposition the possibility of putting in a detailed submission instead. The letter states—

... I would welcome a detailed submission from you which I could pass on to the Taskforce for its consideration.

Such a submission was not forthcoming.

A government member: Shame on him.

Ms BOYLE: It is shame on the Leader of the Opposition that he is making this issue party political, that he insists on running some other kind of agenda rather than setting politics aside and putting the best brains there are in the National Party constituency to work with the rest of us. If indeed I am right—and I hope that I am shown to be wrong—that we are seeing only the roll-out of this problem and that there will be further impacts on other sectors of society, we all need the best intellect there is to solve the problem.

I thank some members opposite for the recognition of the early actions that the Beattie government has taken and for their suggestions. I do not believe that the way forward is entirely clear, neither can it be done wisely, particularly on the legal front, without working at a joint level with other states and with the federal government. I urge all of those who might have closer connections to the government in Canberra to ask it to set a date for a meeting so that the Treasurer can attend and Queensland can participate. There are huge questions to be addressed by the legal profession and governments. While there is no doubt that the great majority of those in the legal profession have behaved with a great sense of justice and with the law and democracy in mind, there are maybe some in their profession whose activities will need curtailing. It is important that we find a way forward with speed but without rolling out further costs for all involved. I encourage the Leader of the Opposition to join with us in this task.
